

As It Looks to Luke

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Clarifying Provo's Birthday



By THERON H. LUKE

Yesterday was Provo's 133rd birthday.

Unlike most birthdays, it's been a matter of dispute. The year of 1849 for settlement was never in doubt, but the exact date was.

You owe the corrected date to the newspaper-like alertness and scholarly meanderings of Herald Editor-Emeritus N. LaVerl Christensen, who initiated the move toward the correction in 1969 when he was full-time editor of the Herald.

He also was, and still is in a sort of quiet, unheralded way, perhaps the best informed living person on Provo's history. His history of Provo's two tabernacles is the only thing of its kind, and is safely on record in a couple of libraries. He gave a slide show and talk on early Provo to the Utah Valley Chapter, Utah State Historical Society, which is the best thing of its kind I know of. Without much fanfare, then or now, he has sort of become Provo's best informed historian.

So back in 1968, when he was browsing through LDS Church

Office records in Salt Lake City, he came across something which flew up like a red flag. For years, Provo's birthday had unquestioningly been celebrated on March 12. Yet there before him was a record of a meeting by church leaders planning the settlement of Provo in 1849, and the date of the meeting was March 17. He and others had long been a little suspicious of March 12. The best histories were vague, usually attaching an "approximately" or "about" before the March 12 date. Some didn't have an exact date. Here before him was virtual proof that it had happened at least after March 12.

Christensen returned to Provo, looked up then-Mayor Verl Dixon, and told him he thought it ought to be clarified. He, Christensen, suggested the city commission name a committee to do it, which was done.

The committee included Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen and his late wife, Ann; the late Prof. Gustave O. Larson, long-time Utah and Mormon historian, and Theron H. Luke, Prof. Larson, a beloved friend who still lives today in my

history classes since I frequently quote him, become our chairman.

The Hafens then were among the most prestigious living historians in the entire West. About all I did was listen and watch in awe at the way those three professionals went at the job, and signed my name along with them to the report.

The report was lengthy and thorough. It was done first hand in the LDS Church records in Salt Lake City. It established the correct date to our satisfaction, and it wasn't March 12.

Prof. Larson unearthed the original diary of George Washington Bean, who wrote that with his family, on his 18th birthday (which he wouldn't likely forget), he encamped with his family and the rest of the settlement party on the north bank of Provo River on April 1, 1849. The next day they moved across the river and on April 3 began construction of the original Fork Utah. It was south of the river in the general vicinity of the lower Geneva Road today.

About a year later, because the location proved too wet, they moved eastward to the present site of Provo (at North Park near Fifth West and Fifth North).

The Provo City Commission never said so in so many words, but we were well aware they weren't about to establish Provo's birthday on April Fool. So the members established April 3, the day they actually began construction on the fort, as the community's official beginnings. It's fair and logical, and that has been the official date ever since April 3, 1969, the first year it was recognized.

I might say that the committee's official report, while longer and perhaps with a few more details (Prof. Larson wrote it), only confirmed what Christensen had previously published in the Herald. He himself had done enough work in LDS records that his resulting news story actually could have served as an initial report.

Anyway, that's the story. Hope you had a happy Provo's 133rd birthday.

Wuebbels said the research, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, was the most complete computer analysis of the chemistry of the ozone problem to date.

Some scientists fear that the breakdown of the ozone shield could create a "greenhouse effect," which would cause the earth to heat several degrees above normal and melt polar ice caps.

Wuebbels said the research indicated that if the release of chlorocarbons — which has been banned in aerosol propellants in the United States — were increased, the ozone shield could be drastically reduced.

"With less ozone at higher altitudes and more at lower altitudes, the energy from the ultraviolet light's capture by ozone would heat the lower at-

Different types of chlorocarbons, still widely used in refrigerators, propellants, solvents and degreasers, are virtually indestructible as they mix with the air and waft higher and higher. They are eventually broken apart by intense solar radiation with one piece being a chlorine molecule, which can destroy thousands of ozone molecules before being destroyed itself.

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